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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Additional objects and features of the invention will be more readily apparent from the following detailed description and appended claims when taken in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a logical block diagram of a general computer system, including a search engine system and an indexing system, connected to a network, which may practice the present invention.

Figs. 2A-2D depict entries in a database index, including word entries, meta word entries, and generic meta word entries.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of a method for indexing a database of documents in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Figs. 4A-4D are a flow chart of a method for searching a database of documents, and in particular for searching for specified words to be found within multiple fields, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Figs. 5A-B, 6A-B, and 7A-B provide further detail on some of the steps in the flowchart of Figs. 4A-4D.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Generally, the invention presents an inventive approach to storing and searching meta words that include nesting level information. While in some instances, it is appropriate to store the nesting level directly with a meta word in a database index entry, this does not provide a search engine any information on what nesting level to "jump to" in a document when beginning a search. In other words, in a highly-structured text document with multiple nesting levels for multiple types of fields, a search engine would not know the nesting level at which to begin searching for encompassing fields. The invention overcomes this problem by